



Book of Ezekiel

Chapter 6

*Theme: Sword to fall upon Jerusalem;
remnant to be saved*

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Chapters 6 and 7 are going to be the “messages.” Until now Ezekiel had been pretty much just acting things out; he had been doing things to demonstrate object lessons. Now he is going to elaborate on the meaning of what went on before, in effect like an editorial.

McGee Introduction: The book of Ezekiel is a very orderly book, and up to this point we have had prophecies which largely concerned Jerusalem. However, the prophet will now turn his attention to the whole land of Israel: judgment is going to come upon the whole land.

Ezekiel is with the second delegation of people who were taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar. They were slaves of the government of Babylon working in the agricultural area by the river Chebar, the great canal running off the Euphrates River. Most of the people, however, were still back in the land, and Jerusalem had not yet been devastated. The false prophets continued to assure the people that everything was going to be all right and that the captives would be able to return shortly. Meanwhile, Jeremiah was saying that the captivity would last seventy years, but they paid no attention to him. They listened to the false prophets because their message sounded better and was very optimistic.

I have found the same attitude among people throughout the years of my ministry. After I preached a series of messages on the judgments of God found in the books of the prophets, one very prominent man in my church at that time withdrew from the church. He said, “I go to church to be comforted, and I am not being comforted.” He did not want to hear the Word of God. I discovered later that in his business dealings he did not need to be comforted; the judgement messages were good for him—they were digging in right where he was! Another lady stopped coming to my church, saying, “There were times when Dr. McGee made me feel very bad. Now I go to church, and the preacher makes me feel very good.” Frankly her church was a cult, and its message concerned how to make friends and influence people. It emphasized the power of positive thinking: just feel good about it, and it will be good. May I say to you, that is *not* the message of the Word of God.

In chapters 6 and 7 we have two messages of judgment. Ezekiel now is going to speak on that which concerns all of the land, and his message is that the idolaters are to die and the land is to be desolated.¹

ESV Introduction: 6:1–7:27 Oracles against the “Land.” These two extended oracles share the feature of being addressed to “geography”: the “mountains” (6:2) and “land” (Hb. *’adamah*; lit., “ground”; 7:2) of Israel, a feature also shared with 20:46; 21:2; 35:2; and 36:1, 6. Although in both cases the real audience is human (see 6:6), this form of address must have some significance beyond being simply symbolic. A deliberate connection of both “mountains” and “land” is found in ch. 36—one of the most theologically important chapters in the book, which forms a counterpart to chs. 6 and 7. Chapters 6 and 7 both describe coming punishment, but each addresses a different theme.

McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 5:17). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Chuck Smith Introduction: Ezekiel here addresses himself to the mountains of Israel. The people of Israel had built places of worship on the tops of the mountains, but not worship to Jehovah God, but to Baal, to Molech, Mammon. And because the mountains were the places for these altars and groves and places of pagan worship, he addresses the prophesy against the mountain telling of the desolation that is going to come. How that they are going to be wasted without inhabitant.

Now, as we get to the thirty-fourth chapter, thirty-fifth chapter, he again addresses himself to the mountains of Israel which have been desolate for so long. And he tells them that they are going to be inhabited again. So, it is interesting to make a contrast between this prophesy against the mountains of Israel where so much false worship had gone on, and later on, after the period that God has brought His judgment against the people and they are brought back into the land, how again he speaks to the mountains and how the blessing of the Lord will be there as the nation is inhabited again.²

Ezekiel 6:1

And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

[And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying ...] This is the 5th prophesy in Ezekiel (Ezekiel 6:1-10, fulfilled). The next prophesy is in Ezekiel 6:11.

LAN: This is the beginning of a two-part message. Remember that Ezekiel could speak only when giving messages from God. The message in Ezekiel 6 is that Judah's idolatry will surely call down God's judgment. The message in Ezekiel 7 describes the nature of that judgment—utter destruction of the nation. Nevertheless, God in his mercy saved a remnant. Ezekiel prophesies against the mountains of Israel because mountains were sites of the “high places” used to worship idols.³

Twenty Predictions—Fulfilled (Dake):

1. I will bring a sword upon the mountains, hills, rivers, and valleys (Ezekiel 6:3).
2. I will destroy your high places.
3. Your altars will be desolate (Ezekiel 6:4).
4. Your images will be broken.
5. I will cast down your slain men before your idols.
6. I will lay the dead carcasses of the children of Israel before their idols (Ezekiel 6:5).
7. I will scatter your bones round about your altars.
8. In all your dwelling places the cities will be laid waste (Ezekiel 6:6).
9. The high places will be laid waste and made desolate.
10. Your altars will be laid waste and made desolate.
11. Your idols will be broken and cease to be worshiped.
12. Your images will be cut down.

² Chuck Smith, Notes on Ezekiel, Pastor Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa, CA

³ Life Application Bible Notes on Ezekiel

13. Your works will be abolished.
14. The slain will fall in your midst (Ezekiel 6:7).
15. You will know that I am Jehovah.
16. Yet I will leave a remnant that you may have some that will escape the sword and be scattered among the nations (Ezekiel 6:8).
17. They that escape will remember Me among the nations where you will be carried away captive, because I am broken with their whorish heart, which has departed from Me (Ezekiel 6:9).
18. They shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations.
19. They will know that I am Jehovah.
20. They will know that I have not said in vain those things which I said would come upon them (Ezekiel 6:10).⁴

McGee: This verse opens the first of the two messages; the second message in chapter 7 begins the same way: “Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying” (Ezek. 7:1). The people would not accept what Ezekiel said, but Ezekiel told them, “I’m not telling you what I *think*, and I’m not telling you what I *hope* or what I’d *like* to see come to pass. I’m telling you what *God* says.”

It is also interesting to note that both of these messages conclude with “and they shall know that I am the LORD.” God sent this judgment upon them so that they would know He was the Lord; one of the purposes of judgment is that men might know that God is a holy God.

This world needs to know that God is a holy God. We have had a great deal of emphasis upon the fact that God is love. While it is true that God is love, it is only half the story. We need to look on the other side of the coin: God is holy, and God *will* punish sin. If you turn in disobedience from Him, if you deny Him and do not accept His salvation, there is only one alternative left—judgment. Men today try to excuse themselves; they do not want to recognize that they are sinners. They attempt to write God off and bow Him out of His universe by saying He does not even exist.

A brilliant young Hebrew, who was a chaplain at the University of Pittsburgh a number of years ago, attempted to show that God did not exist. His argument was based on the premise that the God of the Hebrew Bible is depicted as the faithful protector of His chosen people, but at least six million Jews had died at the hands of the Nazis. He wrote, “To believe in the God of the covenant today you must affirm that their Creator [that is, of the nation Israel] used Adolph Hitler as the rod of His wrath to send His people to the death camps, and I find myself utterly incapable of believing this. Even the existentialist’s leap of faith cannot resurrect this dead God after Auschwitz.” This young rabbi speaks of the death of God as a cultural event. Wistfully and sadly he comes to the conclusion that there is no God because the God of the covenant is a God who would protect Israel and would never let anything happen to them. May I point out that he never takes into consideration, as Ezekiel did, that there might be something wrong with the people upon whom the judgment came. They had turned their backs upon God and had

⁴ Dake Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

denied Him. They had been given a special privilege, and that privilege created a responsibility which they did not measure up to.

Ezekiel is telling the people that it is God who is sending this judgment that He might confirm to them that He is a *holy* God. His judgment is an awful thing. Paul wrote, “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men . . .” (2 Cor. 5:11). Because Ezekiel was made aware of God’s holiness at the beginning of his ministry, he devoted his life to the ministry of “persuading men.”⁵

Vs. 1-7 The divine word directed Ezekiel to set his face “toward the mountains of Israel and prophesy against them.” Apparently he was to look in a westwardly direction as he spoke these words. He actually called upon the mountains to hear the word of the Lord! Those mountains, hills, ravines and valleys were the places where Israel had practiced idolatry in “high places.” Josiah had made a valiant effort to rid the land of these pagan shrines. When he died, however, the high places rapidly reappeared. The “sword” of divine punishment would fall upon these rural areas as well as the city of Jerusalem (6:1–3).

God spoke very specifically about what he was about to do to the mountains of Judah. The sacrificial altars would be left desolate, the incense altars smashed. The slain would lie unburied before the blockheads they worshiped as gods. Sacred worship areas would be defiled by the bones of those who once worshiped there. Cities once teeming with people would be waste places. Popular high places would be desolate. Their idols would be broken and cease to exist. All of this would transpire so that their evil “works may be blotted out” (6:4–6).

For emphasis Ezekiel again alluded to the slaughter about to take place in the mountains of Israel: “The slain shall fall among you!” Then he introduced a new thought: “and you will know that I am the Lord.” This so-called recognition formula, which occurs some sixty times in the book, captures the theme of this prophet. God’s motive in all that he does is that he might be recognized as the only God. He desires more than anything that his people have a true understanding of his nature (6:7).⁶

ESV: Against the Mountains of Israel. The address to the “mountains of Israel” (v. 2)—a phrase unique to Ezekiel in the OT—does more than strike a nostalgic note, although it does that as well. The hills were inherently linked to illicit worship (see 1 Kings 14:23; 2 Chron. 21:11; Jer. 3:6), and this is Ezekiel’s focus. Variations of the “recognition formula” (“you shall know that I am the Lord,” Ezek. 6:7; cf. vv. 10, 13, and 14) structure the chapter.

McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 6:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.
Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 6:1–7). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

Ezekiel 6:2

Son of man, set thy face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them,

God's judging word strikes at the places of sin as well as the people of sin. God promised destruction for worship places dedicated to false gods.

Missler: Notice that he has given up on the people. Rhetorically, he is prophesying against the mountains because of idolatry. In the Old Testament, we constantly read of the "groves." It was a characteristic heathen practice in the land to establish altars in "high places," the mountaintops. The "groves" that were near them were various vestiges of idolatrous practices. They were actually phallic symbols, symbols of Canaanite worship.

God took idolatry seriously enough to make it a capital crime. He brought the nation heavy judgments, including what we saw in Chapter 5, cannibalism! The sieges and abuses on them by their conquerors were brought about as God's judgment of idolatry. (Lev 26:30-33; Hos 4:13; Isa 65:7; Jer 3:6).

The role of Jerusalem and the role of Israel was to be a witness to the rest of the world of what God was really all about. He had a special relationship with these people in the interest of them being a witness of Him, and they obviously were a poor witness, and He judged that.

It is also interesting how He was now dealing with the mountains rather than the people. We have an example in 1 Kings 13, where the prophet speaks to the altar rather than to King Jeroboam. There were opportunities where the prophet would deal with an object rather than a person, a sort of put down to the person.⁷

Dake: [set thy face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them]

Ezekiel was commanded to set his face toward the mountains of Israel and prophesy against them, as he would speak to living things. The main burden was against the seats of idolatrous worship which God had so hated in Israel for centuries, and which He was determined to stamp out before blessing them in the eternal program He had in mind for them (Ezekiel 6:1-7).

mountains of Israel—that is, of Palestine in general. The *mountains* are addressed by personification; implying that the Israelites themselves are incurable and unworthy of any more appeals; so the prophet sent to Jeroboam did not deign to address the king, but addressed the altar (1Ki 13:2). The mountains are specified as being the scene of Jewish idolatries on "the high places" (Ez 6:3; Le 26:30).⁸

Clarke: Set thy face toward the mountains of Israel—This is a new prophecy, and was most probably given after the four hundred and thirty days of his lying on his left and right side were accomplished. By Israel here, Judea is simply meant; not the ten tribes, who had long before been carried into captivity. Ezekiel uses this term in reference to the Jews only.

⁷ Chuck Missler, Notes on Ezekiel, khouse.org

⁸ Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Eze 6:2). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

The mountains may be addressed here particularly, because it was on them the chief scenes of idolatry were exhibited.⁹

The **mountains of Israel** may signify the land in general (see 36:1–6); however, the **hills** could be especially condemned because in their wooded areas the people had built altars and shrines to Canaanite idols (v. 13). **High places** were originally elevated locations for the worship of the god Baal and other deities of the Canaanite pantheon. The term *high place* could be used of any location, whether hilltop or valley (see v. 6; Jer. 7:31) where Canaanite gods were worshiped (1 Kin. 11:4–10). The Israelites adopted the use of these and associated worship practices including sexual misconduct, sorcery, spiritism, snake worship, and child sacrifice. Before entering the Promised Land, the Hebrews had been commanded to abolish all the high places where idols were worshiped (Num. 33:52).¹⁰

On most of the *mountains* of Palestine at this time would have been some kind of altar to Baal (cf. Jer. 3:6-9). See note on Hos. 2:13. This worship of idols, which they should have destroyed when they conquered the land (Deut. 7:5), is the reason for God’s judgment on them. He would spare only a “remnant” (vv. 8-10).¹¹

The mountains of Israel. They formed the chief topographical feature of the land of Israel. The phrase is peculiar to Ezekiel. See also 6:2, 3; 19:9; 33:28; 34:13, 14; 35:12; 36:1, 4, 8; 37:22; 38:8; 39:2, 4, 17. In 36:1-15, the prophet portrays the felicity of the mountains under the new kingdom. 3. **The mountains ... hills...rivers... and valleys** were physical features different from the flat Babylonian plains. They were also seats of idolatry of many kinds (Amos 7:9; Hos 4:13; Jer 2:20, 23; 7:31, 32; Isa 57:3-12; Zech 12:11; Mal 2:10, 11). The course of idolatry had been checked in Israel by such leaders as Samuel, David, Asa, and Hezekiah. Manasseh re-introduced many types of pagan worship. Josiah engaged in a far-reaching reform in 622 B.C. (II Kgs 23:13-20), but his successors did not continue his work. **High places.** For a description of the high place, see W. F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, pp. 92, 105-107; G. E. Wright, *Biblical Archaeology*, pp. 113, 114.¹²

God told the prophet to **set his face against the mountains of Israel**. The preposition “against” (*’el*) denotes movement toward something. The phrase “set your/his face toward” was used to denote direction (Gen. 31:21, “headed for”; Num. 24:1), determination or purpose (2 Kings 12:17, “turned to”), or hostile intentions (Lev. 17:10; 20:3, 5-6). Ezekiel used the phrase 14 times (Ezek. 4:3, 7; 6:2; 13:17; 14:8; 15:7 [twice]; 20:46; 21:2; 25:2; 28:21; 29:2; 35:2; 38:2). In each case the phrase means to turn one’s face toward an object with hostile intentions. The instrument of God’s judgment was being aimed at its intended target. Interestingly Ezekiel later prophesied to the “mountains of Israel” (36:1-15), but then he delivered a prophecy of coming blessing.¹³

⁹ Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Old Testament

¹⁰ The Nelson Study Bible Notes on Ezekiel

¹¹ The Ryrie Study Bible

Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 6:2). Chicago: Moody Press. Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 6:1–2). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

ESV: set your face. Another favorite phrase of Ezekiel, expressing determination, reflects God's own orientation in Jer. 44:11 and that of the "servant" in Isa. 50:7. Luke used it of Jesus in Luke 9:51.

Constable: The Lord directed Ezekiel to pronounce an oracle of judgment against "the mountains of Israel." This phrase occurs 17 times in Ezekiel and nowhere else in the Old Testament. In 36:1-15 Ezekiel prophesied a message of restoration to these mountains. The mountains of Israel, which run the entire length of the country from north to south, represent the whole land of Israel, especially Jerusalem, which sits on the central watershed ridge. By contrast, Babylonia was very flat. Specifically, the mountains of Israel also stand for the centers of pagan worship where the Israelites practiced idolatry. The expression "set your face toward" always means to turn toward something with hostile intentions in all 14 of its occurrences in Ezekiel.¹⁴

"If the practice of turning to Jerusalem for prayer was already catching on among the exiles (*cf.* Dn. 6:10), there would be particular irony in his [Ezekiel's] doing this in an act of condemnation."¹⁵

Ezekiel 6:3

And say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys; Behold, I, *even* I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places.

This is a reference to the idols that were up on high ground.

BSB: 3-4 "High places," the sanctuaries and shrines which were located on hilltops, were condemned because they were usually influenced by various forms of idolatry, and because God had specified only one place of worship (*cf.* Deut 12:1-28). Ezekiel was commanded to prophesy against these altars of false worship which combined the worship of God with the worship of Canaanite fertility gods and goddesses.¹⁶

God, One God—The failure to recognize that God is the one and only God brought the renewed captivity of the people of God. God was teaching them to recognize Him only as God.¹⁷

rivers—literally, the "channels" of torrents. Rivers were often the scene and objects of idolatrous worship.¹⁸

¹⁴ Notes on Ezekiel, Dr. Thomas Constable, 2010 Edition

¹⁵ Taylor, p 89

¹⁶ Believer's Study Bible Notes on Ezekiel

¹⁷ Disciples Study Bible Notes on Ezekiel

Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Eze 6:3). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Ezekiel was also to speak against **Israel's ravines and valleys**. The significance of these words can be understood only in light of the Canaanite religious practices that permeated Israel (cf. Jer. 2:20-28; 17:1-3; 32:35). Israel was supposed to worship only the God of heaven in His temple in Jerusalem, but she set up shrines to false gods throughout the land (cf. 2 Kings 21:2-6, 10-15). Thus by addressing his message to the land itself, Ezekiel was focusing on the people's immoral use of the land.¹⁹

McGee: "**Mountain**" in Scripture, if used figuratively, speaks of government, but you need to determine if it is being used literally or figuratively. I believe Ezekiel is speaking of that land, the good old terra firma—right down where there's plenty of dirt.

"I will destroy your high places." In that land under every kind of tree there was a heathen altar around which the grossest immorality took place. This is what the heathen, the Gentiles did, but now this nation, God's chosen people, had given themselves over to the same idolatry. God says to them, "Judgment is coming upon you."²⁰

ESV: The treaty curses of Leviticus 26 lurk in the background. This is especially clear in the threat to bring a sword upon you, used five more times in Ezekiel (5:17; 11:8; 14:17; 29:8; and 33:2) and once in Lev. 26:25, but only in three other places in the entire OT. The high places (Hb. *bamot*) were not just the crests of hills. They were constructed cultic installations that could, therefore, be destroyed.

Constable: Ezekiel was to announce to his audience of exiles that God would bring warriors against Israel's mountains, hills, ravines, and valleys, namely, the places where the people worshipped at pagan shrines (cf. 2 Kings 23:10). The object of His judgment would be the high places of worship that stood throughout the land. God would destroy the altars, and the people who worshipped before them would fall slain around them. The idols would not be able to defend their worshippers. The Lord would defile these altars with the bones of the Israelites who died before them (cf. Lev. 26:30; 2 Kings 23:20; Ps. 53:5; 141:7; Jer. 8:1-2). Scattered animal bones often marked these places of sacrifice, but human bones would pollute them in the future. Pagan altars of all types that the people had built would be broken down throughout the country along with the cities. Many people would die, and God's people would know that He had judged them. "Judgment is a pervasive theme of all the prophets of Israel, but none exceeds Ezekiel in the abundance and intensity of his messages of divine retribution. Moreover, none reiterates as much as Ezekiel the pedagogical purposes of the visitations of the Lord: 'that they [Israel and the nations] might know Yahweh.' Judgment, then, is not only retributive but redemptive. God's purpose in judgment is not to destroy the peoples He has created but to bring them back into harmony with His creation purposes for them."

19 Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary: An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 6:3-7). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

20 McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 6:3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Ezekiel 6:4

And your altars shall be desolate, and your images shall be broken: and I will cast down your slain *men* before your idols.

Dake: Your images shall be broken—Literally, your sun images; representations of the sun, which they worshipped.

The phrases **cast down your slain, lay the corpses, and scatter your bones** refer to God's judgment. Dead people lying unburied and bones scattered around signify the ultimate defilement of the land. God would bring this upon them because they had defiled and desecrated themselves by worshipping in the pagan high places (see 2 Kin. 23:20; Ps. 53:5).²¹

images—called so from a *Hebrew* root, “to wax hot,” implying the mad *ardor* of Israel after idolatry [CALVIN]. Others translate it, “sun images”; and so in Ez 6:6 (see 2Ki 23:11; 2Ch 34:4; Is 17:8, *Margin*).²²

Incense altars. Not “sun images” of the older versions. See also Lev 26:30; II Chr 14:3; 34:4, 7; Isa 17:8; 27:9; Ezk 6:4, 6. Small limestone altars, with a horn at each corner, and pottery stands for the burning of incense have been found at Megiddo. An inscribed specimen found at Palmyra in Syria has established the identity of the *ḥammān* (cf. Albright, *op. cit.*, pp. 144-147, 215; Wright, *op. cit.*, pp. 113, 114). **Your idols.** Hebrew *gillûlîm* occurs thirty-nine times in Ezekiel and only nine times in the rest of the OT. The root means *to roll*, but the specific derivation of this name of contempt is obscure.²³

Chuck Smith: (Vs. 4-7) So, he predicts this slaughter that is going to come and the places where they have worshipped these false gods to be destroyed, the idols to be broken, and the pieces of the idols scattered with the bones of the people who had been turning away from God in this sacrilege and the worshipping of these idols in these high places.

Now, we get this interesting phrase in verse 7, and it is used some sixty-two times in Ezekiel, where the Lord declares, "And ye shall know that I am the Lord." You see, they had been worshipping these false gods and God is declaring, "I am going to destroy them and they that worship them, and you will know that I am the Lord."

It is interesting when we get to the thirty-eighth chapter of Ezekiel and God there tells us of the destruction that He is going to bring against that massive Russian invasion, with all of the various allies that they will be bringing. And when God utterly destroys them He said, "And then the nations of the world will know that I am the Lord." He is now seeking to teach them this fact. They've been turning from Him; they've been worshipping these other gods. So over and over He said, "I'm going to bring these judgments, and when I do, when this happens, you will know that I am the Lord."

²¹ The Nelson Study Bible Notes on Ezekiel

²² Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Eze 6:4). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.
²³ Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 6:4). Chicago: Moody Press.

Ezekiel 6:5

And I will lay the dead carcasses of the children of Israel before their idols; and I will scatter your bones round about your altars.

Dake: Will scatter your bones round about your altars—This was literally fulfilled by the Chaldeans. According to Baruch, 2:24, 25, they opened the sepulchres of the principal people, and threw the bones about on every side.

Ezekiel 6:6

In all your dwellingplaces the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate; that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, and your idols may be broken and cease, and your images may be cut down, and your works may be abolished.

Dake: They that escape of you shall remember me—Those that escape the sword, the pestilence, and the famine, and shall be led into captivity, shall plainly see that it is God who has done this, and shall humble themselves on account of their abominations, leave their idolatry, and worship me alone. And this they have done from the Babylonish captivity to the present day.

McGee: It is too bad that the Jews in Germany did not read the Book of Ezekiel rather than turning to a man like Hitler, which the entire nation did at the beginning. Israel should have turned to the living and true God and been acquainted with His method of dealing with men. You cannot trifle with God, my friend. Judgment does come.

America struggles to bring peace to the world; but, instead of solving our problems, they continue to mount up. Why? Because God judges. Do you think God is a senile old man with long whiskers, sitting on a cloud and weeping crocodile tears? My friend, God is a *holy* God. In chapter 1 Ezekiel saw a vision of a holy God: those wheels within wheels depicting the energy of God as He moves forward to accomplish His purposes, and the fire and whirlwind showing that God does move in judgment upon this earth in which we live. To understand God in this way may be a bitter pill, but when we take the bitter pills the doctor gives us, they do help us. We need to swallow this bitter pill: we are dealing with a holy God, and He is not wrong; we are the ones who are wrong. Are you willing to admit that?

God is saying, “I am going to judge Israel, and it is not going to be easy.” I am afraid Israel was not at all willing to admit their wrong.²⁴

24 McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 6:5). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Word Focus

idols

(Heb. *Gillulim*) (6:4; 20:16; 30:13; 2 Kin. 23:24) H1544: This Hebrew noun is related to a verb which means “to roll” (Gen. 29:3; Josh. 10:18). The word refers to “shapeless things” like stones or tree logs of which idols were made (6:9; 20:39; 22:3; 1 Kin. 21:26). The prophet Ezekiel uses this Hebrew term for *idols* nearly 40 times, always contemptuously, for these false gods had led Israel away from the true God (14:5). The word *gillulim* may be related to a similar Hebrew expression meaning “dung pellets.” Later Jewish commentators mocked the *gillulim* as the “dung idols,” idols as worthless as dung.

Ezekiel 6:7

And the slain shall fall in the midst of you, and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

Missler: “And ye shall know that I am the Lord.” The main theme of this book.

“Idols” - occurs 39x in the book of Ezekiel. Commentators believe it is a word coined by Ezekiel of disparagement, somehow it means “block gods” not just “idols.”

Leviticallly, contact with a dead body was considered defiling (Num 9:6-10; 2 Kgs 23, etc.). That is why the grave sites were whitewashed at the time of Passover, so that strangers coming to celebrate would not inadvertently stumble on the graves and become ceremonially defiled so that they could not celebrate the feast.

Since the ground God wanted to have sanctified was defiled by the idols, He was defiling that ground with their bones. There is a lot of irony behind this. Instead of having the fragrance of temple incense, God would give them the foul smell of decomposing, unburied bodies. He did not even give them the honor of burial.

So in the imagery here, especially to a Levitical mind, there was an irony in this. It was not just that they were going to get slaughtered. The whole thing was God’s way of taking vengeance for the fact that they had not held Him sacred.

you shall know that I am the LORD: Ordinarily, one would come to *know* more to experience the reality of the living God through encounters with His mercy. But because of the evil path that the people of Judah had taken, they would experience His reality in a dreadful manner—through His judgment (Isa. 28:21).²⁵

ye shall know that I am the Lord—and not your idols, lords. Ye shall know Me as the all-powerful Punisher of sin.²⁶

²⁵ The Nelson Study Bible Notes on Ezekiel

²⁶ Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Eze 6:7). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

After the temple in Jerusalem was completed, worshiping at high places was once again discouraged. Most high places remaining in the land were dedicated to false gods (1 Kings 11:7-10). The conflict between true worship and false worship often centered on these high places. Those kings who followed God tried to destroy the high places (e.g., Hezekiah, 2 Kings 18:3-4; Josiah, 2 Kings 23:8-9), and kings who did not follow God rebuilt them (e.g., Manasseh, 2 Kings 21:1-6).

By Ezekiel's time the high places were again flourishing in Judah. They included altars for sacrificing animals to false gods, incense altars for offering incense to the gods, and idols which were physical representations of the gods (Ezek. 6:4). Israel's pernicious idolatry was a cancer that had to be eradicated.

God's judgment would be swift and sure. Both the false places of worship and those who built them and worshiped at them were to be destroyed. God vowed to intervene so that the high places ... altars ... idols, and incense altars would all be wiped out. Also people who built them would be killed, and their dead bodies would be strewn beside their crushed idols and altars (v. 5). Then the nation would realize that its gods were false. The people would know, God said, that I am the LORD. This phrase occurs 63 times in Ezekiel; by using Yahweh, God's covenant name, Ezekiel was focusing attention on the contrasting unfaithfulness and apostasy of the people.²⁷

Ezekiel 6:8

Yet will I leave a remnant, that ye may have *some* that shall escape the sword among the nations, when ye shall be scattered through the countries.

Missler: Here is one place where the scope of God's message through Ezekiel goes beyond his immediate audience of the Babylonian captivity. "When ye shall be scattered through the countries." Note that countries is plural, which takes this statement further than the Babylonian captivity and into the longer diaspora.

LAN: 8-10 A ray of light appears in this prophecy of darkness—God would spare a remnant of people, but only after they had learned some hard lessons. God sometimes has to break a person in order to bring him or her to true repentance. The people needed new attitudes, but they wouldn't change until God broke their hearts with humiliation, pain, suffering, and defeat. Does your heart long for God enough to change those areas displeasing him? Or will God have to break your heart?

BSB: Ezekiel foresaw the survival of a "remnant." Some had escaped to other lands as seed for preserving the nation (cf. Isa 11:11, note; Jer 43:7). Going through the Exile, enduring hunger, fire, sickness, and the sword, the remnant would experience the purifying and strengthening of their faith.

27 Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 6:3-7). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

The Church, Remnant—God’s judgment of His people has a purpose. He intends to present to Himself a purified remnant. The remnant, recognizing God’s grace, repent and call upon the Lord. They know God carries out His threats against a rebellious people.²⁸

Not only would God prove His justice and faithfulness to His past promises and warnings about the consequences of idolatry (see 5:13), but He would leave a remnant of His people so they would remember the One true God among the nations. God had promised that, despite any future destruction of the nation that might occur because of sin, He would always preserve a portion from annihilation (see Deut. 28:61–64). The chief purpose of even calamitous punishment was the production of a repentant and spiritually restored remnant.²⁹

There were some among these people who remained faithful to God. The nation as a whole went away from God, but there was a believing remnant. This is true of the church today. Liberalism has taken over the bulk of the organized church, but there are many of God’s people left. God takes note of the faithful ones.

Vs. 8-10 Though the nation as a whole had been rejected, faithful individuals would be spared. Some would escape the tribulation which Ezekiel had been describing. God would leave a “remnant,” though they would be scattered “among the nations.” These captives would “remember” the Lord, i.e., they would seek to restore their relationship with God. They would realize how deeply their dalliance with pagan idols had hurt the Lord. Their “adulterous hearts” and wandering eyes had brought pain to the heart of God. They would come to regard idolatry as nothing less than spiritual harlotry. Because of this change of attitude, they “will loathe themselves in their own sight for the evils which they have committed, for all of their abominations.” This is Ezekiel’s way of describing genuine repentance. Most important, however, they would come to recognize the true nature of Yahweh as the God of truth and justice.³⁰

Chuck Smith: Now, though God has brought His judgment against Israel and an extremely severe judgment, and people might question, "Why was God so fierce in His judgment against His people?" But the Bible says, "Unto whom much is given, much is required" (Luke 12:48). So, these people were extremely blessed of God. In fact, they were the most blessed people on the face of the earth.

"What advantage," Paul said, "does the Jew have?" And he answered his question by saying, "Much, and in every way, for unto them were committed the oracles of God, the commandments, the statutes the ordinances" (Romans 3:1-2). God had given them so very, very much, and because He had given them so much, He in turn requires much from them.

Now that should be a warning to us, for God has given us so much. The knowledge and the understanding of His Word, and thus God requires much from us. So, God brought His judgment against them. It was fierce and it has been a continuing judgment, but always, always though many of them became apostate, turned from God,

²⁸ Disciples Study Bible Notes on Ezekiel

²⁹ The Nelson Study Bible Notes on Ezekiel

³⁰ Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 6:8–10). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

yet God always had His faithful remnant among them. And this has always been the case. There have always been those who were true to God and faithful to God.

Now, at the time of national apostasy when Israel had been led to worship Baal by Jezebel and her husband Ahab, and Elijah had had this contest with the prophets of Baal there on Mount Carmel. And after God sent the fire and he had the popular movement of the people going with him for a moment, he took advantage of it and he took the prophets of Baal, four hundred of them, down to the river and killed them all. Jezebel was out of town at the time. When she came back, heard what Elijah had done to her four hundred priests, she said, "God do so to me if by tomorrow night I don't have that fellow's head." And Elijah took it on the run, and he ran all the way down to the area of Mount Sinai. And there he hid in a cave. And the Lord said, "Come on out to the entrance of the cave." And he came out and the Lord said, "Elijah, what are you doing here?" And Elijah said, "I have been jealous for God, for all of Israel has turned against God and I, I only am left. I am the only true servant You've got in the land, Lord, and they are trying to kill me. They are looking for me to kill me. Lord, You're going to be without anybody pretty soon. As soon as they catch me, Lord, You're not going to have anyone on Your side." And the Lord answered Elijah and said, "Elijah, I have seven thousand among them who have not bowed their knee to Baal."

God had His faithful remnant. Though it is true the majority of the nation had become apostate, yet God still had His faithful remnant among them who He knew. "Always I will leave a remnant; they will never be utterly destroyed." God always keeps that remnant and from that remnant God will bring forth yet a people to praise Him and to bring glory unto Him.

Now, though Israel has seen among the people of the world some of the greatest tribulation, some of the hardest experiences, yet they have not seen the worst, for the worst is yet to come. Even worse than the holocaust. That period that is coming described in the Bible, especially in the book of Revelation, a great tribulation when they will be deceived by this leader that is going to arise in Europe. And many of them will hail him as their savior, because he is going to make a covenant and help them rebuild their temple. Yet, when he turns upon them and he comes to the temple that they have built and stands in the holy place and declares that he is God and demands that he be worshipped as God. When they at that point turn against him, he is going to turn upon them with all of his wrath and fury.

But God is going to save a remnant who will flee down to the area of the rock city of Petra, where God will preserve them for three and a half years. But this man will then seek to exterminate the Jews. And because he will have worldwide power, especially through economics, the Jews around the world will suffer once more heavy persecution. It is interesting, tragically, the anti-Semitism that does exist in the hearts of sinful men. I know people who absolutely hate the Jews, bitter against them without any real reason to be. It's just something that is in the heart of sinful man. And the Jews, unfortunately, have suffered from the hands of man for so long. But, yet, God will have His faithful remnant. And in the Kingdom Age, when Jesus comes again and establishes the kingdom, then shall they flourish and be blessed once more above all the nations of the earth, as the Lord sets up His millennial reign.

So, it's a very sad and tragic thing, the judgment that has come, the judgment that shall come. But through it all, even in the whole thing, God always has His faithful remnant.

As Paul speaks to the Romans, in his epistle to the Romans, eleventh chapter, of God's faithful remnant. "So, I will leave a remnant that ye may have some that shall escape the sword among the nations when you'll be scattered through all the countries." He's not going to destroy them completely. And it is interesting that the Jew today maintains his national identity wherever he is.

Constable: The Lord would leave a remnant alive, however, when He brought this judgment and scattered His people in captivity. They would despise themselves when they remembered how their adulterous hearts and lustful literally means "dung-gods." This word occurs 38 times in Ezekiel and only nine times elsewhere in the Old Testament. The remnant would remember that the Lord's promised judgments for their sins were not vain (cf. v. 7).

"What idolatry most reveals about the people who practice it is not merely another faith, but also an actual lack of faith. Modern idolatry, like the ancient Israelite-Near Eastern kind, is essentially materialistic (1 John 2:15-17; 5:21). Instead of full reliance on God, while we may not deny His existence, we don't trust Him to take care of us materially. Thus we do everything we can to gain worldly possessions, to secure our future, to have a 'comfortable' retirement, to succeed in a competitive world. With this comes the danger of 'losing our own souls' because we cannot serve God and money (Matt. 6:24). When we fail to trust God for our needs, we go far beyond the bounds of providing for our basic requirements and can thus trap ourselves in modern idolatry, which is nothing other than materialism (1 Tim. 6:6-10)."

Ezekiel 6:9

And they that escape of you shall remember me among the nations whither they shall be carried captives, because I am broken with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes, which go a whoring after their idols: and they shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations.

Remnant - is again mentioned. See Isa 1:9 and note that Sodom and Gomorrah were completely wiped out, and obviously here, Israel was not totally wiped out. Cf. Isa 20:20-22; Jer 43:5; Zeph 2:7; Zech 10:9, 12:2-3, 12:9-10; Rom 9:6-13, 11:5-25.

Notice how sin breaks God's heart. In exile the people would come to their senses and *loathe* themselves for what they had done.

they that escape of you shall remember me—The object of God's chastisements shall at last be effected by working in them true contrition. This partially took place in the complete eradication of idolatry from the Jews ever since the Babylonian captivity. But they have yet to repent of their crowning sin, the crucifixion of Messiah; their full repentance is therefore future, after the ordeal of trials for many centuries, ending with

that foretold in Zec 10:9. “They shall *remember* me in far countries” (Ez 7:16; De 30:1–8).³¹

McGee: “And they that escape of you shall remember me among the nations whither they shall be carried captives.” What is this remnant going to do? They are going to be a witness for God.

“Because I am broken with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me” would be better translated “when I shall have broken their whorish heart which has departed from me.” They are people who belong to Him, but they have played the harlot, they have committed spiritual adultery. The organized church which will remain after Christ takes His true church out of the world is also called a harlot in Revelation 17. That is the most frightful chapter in the Word of God—it presents a terrible picture.

“They shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations.” This was one of the results of judgment, but we do not see this result in our world today. This means simply that there will be more judgment, and that judgment is coming during the Great Tribulation Period. The people at that time will gnaw their tongues because of the judgment of God. You would think there would be a great wave of repentance, but there will not be among that crowd.

In Ezekiel’s day there were those who loathed themselves—they repented because they were still close to God. That will be true of God’s people always. If you do not hate yourself whenever you serve the Devil, then you must not be one of God’s people.³²

Ezekiel 6:10

And they shall know that I *am* the LORD, and that I have not said in vain that I would do this evil unto them.

Missler: The concept of idol worship is rhetorically equivalent to the concept of fornication or adultery in a spiritual sense. These were linked up with the concept of idol worship, not just because idol worship did involve a lot of sexual excesses and such; obviously it was that too.

All through Scripture, especially in the Book of Revelation and the Old Testament prophecies, the concept of unfaithfulness theologically was idiomatically identical with the concept of unfaithfulness in a sexual sense. Just as a wife can be unfaithful to her husband, Israel was viewed as being unfaithful to Jehovah. So the concept of the faithless woman was an idiom, poetically speaking, that God used to speak to Israel.

In the midst of God’s judgment came a promise of mercy. God vowed to spare some (cf. 5:3-5; 12:16). Not all Israelites would be destroyed, for some would escape the sword when Israel would be dispersed among the ... nations. The impending defeat of Judah by

31 Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Eze 6:9). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

32 McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 6:9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Babylon did not signal the end of God's covenant promise to Israel. God was not turning away from His promises.

Some Israelites in captivity would remember God. They would call to mind His character—how He grieved for them in their idolatry. The words their adulterous hearts refer to their involvement in idol-worship, an act of unfaithfulness as terrible as a spouse's unfaithfulness in adultery. They would also remember God's faithfulness to His promises, especially those in which He promised to punish disobedience.

Those in exile would loathe themselves because of all their detestable practices. The sad consequences of sin produced a belated but necessary repentance. In acknowledging their sin and the justness of their judgment, they were again brought back to God—they will know that I am the LORD. Their personal knowledge of God would result from the calamity of exile. God did not bring captivity on Israel in vain.

6:11-12. The last section (vv. 11-14) of this sermon begins with God³³

McGee: “And they shall know that I am the LORD”—this is said three times in this chapter, and it is another result of judgment. Again, we do not see this result happening in our own day. Instead of recognizing the hand of God, people are saying that He is not even there. They argue that if He did exist, He would always help them. Oh, my friend, where do we get that idea? God is judging sin. People rebel against this; they do not want a God who judges. You can make a God after your own likeness if you want to, but the holy God is still out there. You might wish He would go away, but He is not going to go away. He will continue to judge.³⁴

ESV 8–10 leave some of you alive. Complete annihilation is moderated with the promise of a remnant (cf. 5:3). The remorse of the survivors is matched by the striking description of the effect that idolatry had on God: **I have been broken** (6:9) uses the same term of God as was used in v. 6 (“idols broken”), and indicates God's deep sorrow at the people's sin.

Ezekiel 6:11

Thus saith the Lord GOD; Smite with thine hand, and stamp with thy foot, and say, Alas for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel! for they shall fall by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence.

God is basically instructing Ezekiel to amplify his words.

Dake: [Thus saith the Lord GOD; Smite with thine hand, and stamp with thy foot, and say ...] This is the 6th prophecy in Ezekiel (Ezekiel 6:11-14, fulfilled). The next, prophecy is in Ezekiel 7:1.

Dake: Eight Predictions—Fulfilled:

33 Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 6:8–12). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

34 McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 6:10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

1. Smite the hands and stamp the feet, and say, Alas for all the vile abominations of the house of Israel! They will fall by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence (Ezekiel 6:11).
2. He that is far off will die of the pestilence (Ezekiel 6:12).
3. He that is near will fall by the sword.
4. He that remains in the city of Jerusalem will be besieged and die of famine.
5. I will accomplish My fury among them.
6. Then will they know that I am Jehovah, when their slain men will be among their idols round about their altars, upon every high hill, in the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree, and under every thick oak, and in all places where they did offer sweet savor to all their idols (Ezekiel 6:13).
7. So will I stretch out My hand upon them, and make their land more desolate than the wilderness toward Diblath in all their habitations (Ezekiel 6:14).
8. They will know that I am Jehovah.³⁵

Dake: Smite with thine hand, and stamp with thy foot—Show the utmost marks of thy astonishment and indignation, and dread of the evils that are coming upon them. Some have contended for the propriety of clapping and stamping in public worship from these words! It is scarcely a breach of charity to think that such persons are themselves incapable either of attending on or conducting the worship of God. To be consistent, they should copy the prophet in his other typical actions as well as these; and then we shall hear of their lying on their left side for three hundred and ninety days, and on their right side for forty days; shaving their heads, burning their hair, baking their bread with dung, etc. Now all these things, because they were typical and commanded, were proper in the prophet: in such persons as the above they would be evidences of insanity. Such extravagant acts are no part of God’s worship.

LAN: Prophets often used this threefold description of judgment upon Jerusalem—sword, famine, and plague—as a way of saying that the destruction would be complete. The sword meant death in battle; famine came when enemies besieged a city; plague was always a danger during famine. Don’t make the mistake of underestimating the extent of God’s judgment. If you ignore the Biblical warnings and turn away from God, God’s punishment awaits you.

Alas: This word, also translated “Ah!” (21:15) and “Aha!” (25:3), is meant sarcastically. Either God was displaying His delight over the destruction of idolatrous places and practices (vv. 1–7, 13) or He was having Ezekiel enact the mocking role of a jealous neighbor nation, such as Ammon (25:1–7).

Vs. 11-14 God directed Ezekiel to dramatize an agonizing lament. He was to clap his hands, stamp his feet, and cry “Alas!” He was to publicly lament “all the evil abominations of the house of Israel” which would precipitate the fall of the nation “by sword, famine, and plague.” He who was near the battlefield would die by the sword. He

³⁵ Dake Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

who was far away from the battle would die by plague. Those who experienced the siege would die by famine. Only then would God's wrath come to an end (6:11f.).

When they had experienced the full impact of God's judgment, Israel would come to recognize that Yahweh is faithful to his word. Ezekiel cited two aspects of the calamity which would produce this recognition by way of example. First, they would see corpses scattered about among their idols in the hilltop shrines and shady sanctuaries where they had offered incense to their gods. Second, they would see their land become a desolation (6:13f.).³⁶

ESV: The prophet's nonverbal actions here indicate the force with which the oracle is to be delivered. This catalog of illicit cultic locations occurs elsewhere in the OT and has its roots in Deut. 12:2.

Ezekiel 6:12

He that is far off shall die of the pestilence; and he that is near shall fall by the sword; and he that remaineth and is besieged shall die by the famine: thus will I accomplish my fury upon them.

Constable (11-14): The people and Ezekiel were to express derision that the sword, famine, and plague (cf. 5:1-3, 12; Rev. 6:4-8) would come and judge these evil abominations (cf. 21:14-17; 22:13; 25:6; Lam. 2:15; Nah. 3:19). These three instruments of judgment, summarizing the full range of divine punishment (cf. 2 Sam. 24:13; Jer. 27:13; 29:17), would affect various parts of the people and touch them all. The people would recognize Yahweh at work in judgment when they observed so many Judahites slain beside their pagan places of worship. He would make the land of Judah more desolate than the wilderness near Diblah. "Diblah" appears only here in the Old Testament. It may be a variation of "Riblah," the border town near Hamath where the Babylonian soldiers took King Zedekiah (2 Kings 25:5-7; Jer. 39:6-7; 52:8-11, 26-27). The Hebrew letters for "d" and "r" are very similar in shape. The purpose of God's judgment was to restore the people to their proper relationship with Him (vv. 7, 10, 13, 14). The expression "they will know that I am Yahweh" appears about 65 times in Ezekiel and was one of the major purposes of God for His apostate people.

"In every generation God's judgment and discipline is misunderstood by most people. God's chief desire is to bring people to himself—or back to himself. When mankind willfully refuses to turn to him, God mercifully uses discipline and judgment to cause the people to recognize that *he is the only true God*, always faithful to what he has said in his word!"

36 Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 6:11–14). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

Ezekiel 6:13

Then shall ye know that I am the LORD, when their slain men shall be among their idols round about their altars, upon every high hill, in all the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree, and under every thick oak, the place where they did offer sweet savour to all their idols.

Then you shall know that I am the LORD: As in vv. 7, 10, the Lord states the purpose of the coming destruction of His city and many of its people. The use of God’s personal name further emphasizes the intent to bring His people back to a personal, intimate relationship with Himself.³⁷

Under every green tree, and under every thick oak. Literally, *under every luxuriant tree and ... leafy terebinth*. The terebinth (.ēlā) is a deciduous tree with pinnate leaves and red berries (*Pistacia terebinthus*), which often reaches a height of forty feet, and has wide spreading branches. It yields a type of turpentine. The verse refers to the cult of the fertility goddess (cf. Hos 4:13). **Sweet savour.** Hebrew, *odor of soothing*, i.e., tranquilizing odor of ascending sacrifices (Gen 8:21; Ex 29:18, 25, 41; Lev 1:9). Used with reference to idols, here and in 16:19; 20:28.³⁸

McGee: I happen to know that the persecution under Hitler drove many wonderful Jews to God. There is a great company of believers today in Europe as a result of that. We forget about them, and very little is said about them. I received a letter once from a wonderful girl whose parents died in those gas chambers, and she testified to the fact that the horrible experience had been the means of her salvation. We need to recognize the hand of God—He is a holy God. If He did not spare His own Son, but let Him die when He became sin for us, why in the world do sinners think they will escape His judgment?

“Their altars, upon every high hill”—God spells out the reason He judged them in the land. My friend, the judgment of God is still upon that land. Many folk like to speak of it as “the land of milk and honey.” Don’t kid your-self—it is not the land of milk and honey today. The people are not turning to Him, and His judgment is still on that land.³⁹

Ezekiel 6:14

So will I stretch out my hand upon them, and make the land desolate, yea, more desolate than the wilderness toward Diblath, in all their habitations: and they shall know that I am the LORD.

Dake: **And make the land—more desolate than the wilderness toward Diblath—** Diblath or Diblathayim is situated in the land of Moab. It is mentioned Numbers 33:46, Almon-Diblathaim; and in Jeremiah 48:22, Beth-Diblathaim. It was a part of that horrible wilderness mentioned by Moses, Deuteronomy 8:15, “wherein were fiery serpents, and

³⁷ The Nelson Study Bible, Notes on Ezekiel

38 Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 6:13). Chicago: Moody Press.

39 McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 6:13). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

scorpions, and drought.” The precise reason why it is mentioned here is not very evident. Some think it is the same as Riblah, where Nebuchadnezzar slew the princes of Israel, and put out Zedekiah’s eyes;

LAN: The phrase “then they will know that I am the LORD” (or a variation on this phrase) occurs 65 times in the book of Ezekiel. The purpose of all God’s punishment was not to take revenge, but to impress upon the people the truth that the Lord is the only true and living God. People in Ezekiel’s day were worshiping man-made idols and calling them gods. Today money, sex, and power have become idols for many. Punishment will come upon all who put other things ahead of God. It is easy to forget that the Lord alone is God, the supreme authority and the only source of eternal love and life. Remember that God may use the difficulties of your life to teach you that he alone is God.

BSB: It has been suggested by some scholars that this verse could be translated “from the wilderness to Riblah” (a city to the north of Damascus). The change from Diblah (which is probably Almon Diblathaim or Beth Diblathaim; cf. Num 33:46; Jer 48:22) is explained as a scribal error, due to the similarities of the Hebrew letters for “R” and “D.” Either translation speaks of great desolation.

the wilderness toward Diblah. This should probably read, “from the wilderness to Riblah” (a city in the N near Hamath), which was the same as saying, “from Dan to Beersheba.” In other words, the destruction of the land would be complete, from N to S.

God is holy and everything he does and instigates is holy. This is seen clearly in the law; its commandments are ‘holy, righteous and good’. (Rom. 7:12). The law forbids sin in all its forms because sin is repugnant to God’s holiness and pollutes and harms his creation. If the law cannot restrict sin, then God will destroy sin. God’s wrath and justice are direct consequences of his holiness. God hates sin, just as a mother hates a disease that is killing her child. The law pushes the sinner into a corner and kicks away the crutches he or she has been depending upon—and so the sinner feels useless and hopeless. But this is the point at which we must arrive if we are to embrace by faith what Christ has done to redeem lost sinners such as we are. As C.H. Spurgeon once said, ‘A man is never so near grace as when he begins to feel he can do nothing at all.’

The law of God is as sweet as the gospel because it works with the grace of God to bring a sinner to salvation. Ezekiel had a hard message to deliver and there would be no hope for these obstinate, stubborn, rebellious people unless they heard it. If he had any reluctance to preach God’s word to his people, the episode of the scroll removed it. Dennis Lane has written:

Ezekiel was now beginning to see more clearly the role he was to play. His vision of God had an end in view, and that end was a message from God to his own contemporaries, which they had no inclination to accept but which they needed to hear. Equipped to understand their opposition, Ezekiel found to his surprise that accepting God’s purpose for himself and his people was finally sweet to his taste. The vision renewed his conviction and experience, and the word imparted content

and direction. He could not have managed without either. Nor could he have survived without God's enabling power day by day.⁴⁰

The imagery in verses 1-7 was repeated here as God promised He would slay the people ... among ... their altars, on every high hill and ... under every spreading tree and every leafy oak. Often on the high places where altars were built were luxuriant trees, which represented growth and possibly fertility (cf. Hosea 4:13). The “oak” (*'ēlāh*) was the terebinth tree. It is a deciduous tree common to Palestine and grows to a height of 35-40 feet. The Elah Valley, where David slew Goliath, probably received its name because of the abundance of these trees (1 Sam. 17:2, 19).

God had given Israel a land luxurious with “spreading” trees and “leafy” oaks, but the people corrupted His gift, using these displays of His bounty as places to offer fragrant incense to all their idols. Therefore God would reduce their rich land to rubble—a desolate waste from the desert to Diblah. Instead of “Diblah” some manuscripts read “Riblah” (NIV marg.), a town on the Orontes River in Syria. If this reading is correct, Ezekiel was referring to all the land, from the desert in the south to Riblah in the north. This seems likely for two reasons. First, there is no record of a city in Judah named Diblah. (Though this is an argument from silence, it seems strange that Ezekiel would use a little-known city to indicate the extent of God's judgment.) Second, the change from Diblah to Riblah can be explained by the similar shape of the Hebrew letters *d* (ד) and *r* (ר). A copyist could easily have misread the manuscript and mistakenly changed the letters.

For the third time in this chapter Ezekiel stated that as a result of the judgment Israel would come to know that He is the LORD (cf. Ezek. 6:7, 10, 14), that is, acknowledge His supreme authority.

(2) Message on the nature of judgment (chap. 7).⁴¹

ESV: The place name **Riblah**, a correction of the Masoretic text's “Diblah,” is based on some Hebrew evidence (the mistake of *d* for *r* was very easy in both paleo-Hebrew as well as later square script). The area being described stretches from the Negev to northern Syria.

40 Jeffery, P. (2004). *Opening up Ezekiel's Visions* (30–31). Leominster: Day One Publications.

41 Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 6:13–14). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

